

Collective Locality
Critique of the International System's Approach to Climate Change

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Abstract

This research explores the root causes of the international system's inability to develop a viable climate change solution. Climate change is arguably one of the most important topics of global governance and international politics. By investigating the workings of the international order, capitalism, and neoliberal ideology in regard to the climate crisis, I propose a solution that addresses known pitfalls. The text is divided into 5 chapters, followed by a conclusion to my critique and proposed solution. First, I begin with an assessment of liberalism as the ruling ideology of our world order. Next, I evaluate the effectiveness of the liberal world order through the mechanism of international agreements. Then, I explore how capitalism and neoliberalism hinder the overall effectiveness of international agreements, followed by the implications of these faults to the climate crisis. Finally, I offer my solution to these problems, a revolutionary movement called Collective Locality, which relies on the transformation of social and cultural values to target the harm induced by capitalism and neoliberal ideology on ourselves and the environment.

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Preface

Presented to you now is the research thesis, *Collective Locality: A Critique on the International System's Approach to Climate Change*. This paper offers a critique to the liberal order, pointed at the implications of capitalism, neoliberalism institutions, lack of democracy on our ability to develop an effective solution to the current environmental and ecological crisis. This has been written in fulfillment to the graduation requirement of the International Studies Department at The Ohio State University and reflects the coursework I pursued for a degree in International Relations and Diplomacy. I was engaged in researching and writing this thesis from December 2019 to March 2021.

My research question was formulated with the assistant of my thesis advisors Inés Valdez and Joel Wainwright. I knew I wanted to provide a critique to a systemic problem and believed that any question that revolved around climate change was the most pressing of our time. Moreover, I have an intense passion for social justice work and knew I wanted to highlight the needs of marginalized voices. Climate change is an all-encompassing problem that involved both problems with injustice and inequities of the system. I decided to develop a critique that would highlight failures of the international system in addressing the climate crisis. Furthermore, I offer a solution that is rather new and developed within the field of International Relations but encompasses the totality of the research, and answers the questions identified.

Maya Edwards

Columbus, March 25, 2021

Introduction

"[The Lakota people] put out the call; we're all here. There's over 400 — probably more — tribes represented. It's a coming together that not even the Native folks of North America have ever seen. And it's wonderful timing because Native folks around the world — we're all finally, we're just done. We've played the game, we let you think that it worked, we got to where we are. Now we're all sick, now the planet is dying, now we're running out of natural resources. Now I think it's time to listen. [It's] definitely a sea change in the way nations stand together. The native folks here have never come together like this in agreement over something beautiful, which is love and spirit, and our common future, which is the children."¹

- Jeanne Dorado, 36, is the principal of Sacred Stone Community School. She was, at the time, 31 weeks pregnant.

It is no secret that we are living in the era of climate change. Despite the deniers and the pesky remanence of “fake news” that linger around our understanding, it is clear that the Earth is warming, at extreme rates, caused by humans. By definition, climate refers to the long-term weather patterns of the earth, a place all humans occupy and therefore is relevant to all of us. Naturally, international relations (IR) theory, has had some things to say regarding the scientific phenomenon. IR theory on climate change is mainly concerned with finding a global solution to the crisis that can stop warming, reverse the effects, and produce a more sustainable future for the planet. Because this is a problem that crosses borders and does not discriminate, it's something that must be addressed by the entirety of the international community. With no

¹ Zambelich, Ariel, and Cassi Alexandra. “In Their Own Words: The 'Water Protectors' Of Standing Rock.”

official governing body, the world relies on international institutions to make decisions and develop agreements to spur collective action. This of course is no easy task.

Most international scholars and policymakers define the liberal world order in self-explanatory terms. It is understood as an “overarching framework of global politics”, in which “nation-states [cooperate] to achieve security and prosperity”.² G. John Ikenberry, a firm believer in the liberal world order, is in favor of this order because, “[despite] its shortcomings- costly and ill-advised wars have been fought in its name, and vast economic and social injustice remain- [...] it has empowered people across the world who seek a better life within a relatively open and rules-based global system.”³ Assuming Ikenberry is correct, the liberal world order’s attempt to address climate change should embody a solution in the interests of all. International agreements are long-winded, complex, and require the sign-off of a majority of member-states to commit. By nature, they tend to be looser commitments as to not infringe on the sovereignty of these nations and to please broad interests. The goals of these agreements it to effectively address the issue while maintaining peace within the international system.

Yet, to say the international agreements in regard to climate change have been “effective” would be a gross understatement. Since the 1990s, countries have made what they consider to be serious attempts to combat climate change. This includes crucial international agreements like the Kyoto Protocol (1998) and the Paris Accords (2015) . Despite the theoretical understanding among countries that they must take up action against climate change, the commitment of these agreements does not suffice to prevent global temperatures from rising. Moreover, the failures of the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Accords create clear winners and losers within our attempts to address climate change. Moreover, those losers are not being represented at all. A true

² Deudney, Daniel, and G. John Ikenberry. “Liberal World: The Resilient Order.”

³ Ikenberry, G. John. “The Plot Against American Foreign Policy: Can the Liberal Order Survive?”

international composed of truly democratic states would represent voice like Jeanee and others who are frustrated with the liberal order's inability to address climate change.

While the Liberal World Order has attempted to critically address climate change, by nature, international agreements prevent proper tend to generate underwhelming commitments, resulting in global ineffective climate action and more harm to the environment. [are you now moving to introduce your argument/explain the failure? Signal that, say "I argue" or "I argue that this failure is due to ...] More specifically, neoliberal institutionalism and the international order's commitment to capitalism have diverted any chances of adequate climate solutions. In this thesis, I will first define the liberal world order, its motives, and purpose. Next, I will tie the failure of international agreements to address climate change to the role of capitalism in the international system. Then, I will explore the environmental implications of a commitment to capitalism and neoliberal ideology. Finally, I will present my ideal solution, the implementation of collective locality derived from the cultural values of anti-capitalist and indigenous communities.

Chapter 1: The Liberal World Order

"From NATO to the U.N. and the E.U., the generation that lived through the first half of the 20th century knew they needed to create a new world order. An order with rules and institutions which, however imperfect, could act both as constraints on individual countries going rogue and as catalysts for co-operation for mutual benefit."

- Ed Davey, Member of Parliament of the United Kingdom

World politics can be framed by a group of highly-capable states, "great powers", that shape the international system. For centuries, these great powers have toed the line between war

and peace consistently having to re-establish postwar settlements. States repeatedly mull over which basic rules and principles will frame the new world order. As a result, we've experienced the rise and evolution of liberal ascendancy—a “Westphalian system of states”—guided by norms, rules, and arrangements. A wider framework exists around these states that promotes and upholds the key characteristics of liberal democracies. From the perspective of IR scholarship, liberal is a “theoretical framework that seeks to explain what states do, not what they should do.”⁴ To clarify, the ideology and the practice of liberalism are two distinct entities. The first being a theory used to explain and predict state behavior. The second, a set of practices that promote liberal ideas in the world order. Although other theories exist about what determines state behavior (realism, constructivism, and occasionally neoliberalism), it is evident that liberalism remains to be the “reigning” ideology of the modern era. Therefore to proceed we need a concrete understanding of liberal theory and how it has shaped the international system. The next section will dissect this liberal ascendancy through a historical lens. I will define and discuss the creation of the liberal world order and explain how it's most prevalent actors (states, international organizations/institutions, non-governmental organizations, and individuals) operate within this order before offering my critique.

Foundational Liberal Theory

Liberalism can be defined as an ideology based on “the moral argument that ensuring the right of an individual person to life, liberty and property is the highest goal of government.”⁵ In the world of international relations (IR) theory, liberalism offers an explanation to how human reason, progress, individual rights and freedoms can be the catalyst to more peaceful and

⁴ Moravcsik, Andrew. “Liberalism and International Relations Theory.”

⁵ Meiser, Jeffrey W. “Introducing Liberalism in International Relations Theory.”

cooperative global relations. The emergence of liberalism in IR theory often begins with Enlightenment thinkers John Lock, Immanuel Kant and Thomas Paine. Several other liberal thinkers can be associated to the development of the ideology, but we begin here because like the enlightenment, liberalism finds its identity in the frame of progress, a striving towards a more peaceful and prosperous world.

The creation of liberal ideology in a popular sense can be attributed to Thomas Paine, most famous for his work *Common Sense* (1776) and *Rights of Man* (1791). Kant's account, on the other hand, was most known in the academic realm, with his work *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Perpetual Peace* (1795). As 18th century theorists, their work provides the foundation of liberalism and provides, an explanation to the core principles of democratic theory: human nature, democratic peace theory, economic interdependence and international institutions. These principles are crucial to understanding the relationship between liberalism and democracy that exists today.

First is the principle of human nature and reason. Here, liberalism claims that there is an innate sense of morality within individuals or that can be taught, influencing their behavior, and resulting in a reduction of conflict. This is primarily an individual analysis. For Paine, "individuals were characterized by reason and goodness"⁶. They existed within a moral obligation towards good by the creation of God, assuring that all interests of individuals were inherently beneficial for everyone because they only had good intentions. Those to blame for violence and war were not humans in their existence, but corrupt governments. Paine believed that human nature as itself was not evil, but the institutional power of monarchs and non-democratic systems were. Here, democracy is emphasized as a way to promote peace because in

⁶ Paine, pp. 83

a democracy, the individuals are given the power to act on their “inherently good” intentions, without interference from corruption and evil.

Contrarily, Kant (1791) was much more pessimistic. Kant regarded human nature as the one to blame. In one passage Kant wrote, “War itself, does not require any particular kind of motivation, for it seems to be ingrained in human nature.”⁷ Reason was not something everyone inherently had, but something that but be taught and acquired. According to Kant, individuals needed to rely on customs and norms, educations and institutions, to sway them towards reason. “It only remains for men to create a good organization for the state...to arrange it is such a way that their self-seeking energies are opposed to one another...so that man, even if he is not morally good in himself, is nevertheless compelled to be a good citizen”⁸. Kant saw that moral and political forces could be shaped and evolved to create a world more conducive to peace.

Now although Paine and Kant differ in their assumption of human nature, they still conclude on the need for reason to establish peaceful relations. This helped established the idea that individuals, whether guided by institutions or inherently given, could use reason to make decisions conducive to peaceful behavior. A republican society in which individuals have the most power, became an extremely powerful and influential idea. The historical success for calls of civil and political rights seen in various revolutions echo the democratic sentiments of Paine and Kant in a way that would be institutionalized for future visions of government.

Next is the democratic peace theory. This refers to the systematic level of the international system in which liberalism calls for the promotion of peace through state-to-state interactions. Democratic peace theory (DPT) was coined by IR scholars and refers to the notion that institutions of representative governments make war an unappealing option for government and citizens alike. As a representative government and a republic, the costs and risks of war

⁷ Kant, pp. 111

⁸ Kant, pp. 112

would be paid by the population. In most situations, this is not the favorable outcome for the citizens and as a result, the population will favor elected officials or decision-makers who choose the more peaceful options. As to protect their own interests, any incumbents or leaders who think otherwise will lose the support of their citizens. This concept of peace between states provides a “clear institutional incentive for democratic leaders to anticipate such an electoral response before deciding to go to war”⁹. This theory finds its root in the work of Paine and Kant. Both agreed that peace was dependent on democratic governance and promotion of international trade organizations¹⁰. For Paine, republics were more peaceful on the account they tend to “negotiate the mistake”¹¹. In other words, Paine believed non-republics operated on the basis of pride and initiated war in an unreasonable manner. In *Rights of Man*, he proclaims, “The right of war and peace is in the nation. Where else should it reside, but in those who are to pay the expense.”¹² Kant echoes this rhetoric five years after, “the consent of the citizens is required to decide whether or not war is to be declared, it is very natural that they will have great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise.”¹³ This sentiment is foundational liberalism and establishes the idea that a government of the people is a central characteristic of a peaceful global order.

The next principle of liberal theory is that economic interdependence amongst states reduces military conflict. Today, liberal perspective argues that economic interdependence lowers the probability of war and conflict by “increasing the value of trading over the alternative of aggression”.¹⁴ Simply put, trade provides “gains” to states. Dependent states therefore should also prefer the gains of trades over the losses of war. Of course, liberals acknowledge that trade

⁹ Russett, Bruce. “Democracy, War, and Expansion Through Historical Lenses.”

¹⁰ Walker, Thomas C. “Two Faces of Liberalism: Kant, Paine, and the Question of Intervention.”

¹¹ Paine, “Common Sense.” pp. 95

¹² Paine, pp. 98

¹³ To clarify: Kant’s claim that economic interdependence was imperative to facilitating global peace is complicated by his later assertions of anti-colonialism. I acknowledge now that contrary to IR theory, Kant did oppose the international justifications of imperialism and colonials.

¹⁴ Copeland, Dale C. “International Security.” pp. 5–41

isn't the sole interest of states and that if territorial expansion is of interest, trade isn't really the solution. This "loophole" explains support for the global lean towards realism as a ruling ideology during periods of imperialism and colonialism¹⁵. Now, we can observe how the liberal theory of trade in lieu of conflict is practiced today in our international order. Consistently, liberal theory points to economic independence as a consistent mechanism for reducing conflict.

Again, we turn to Paine, who pioneered the idea that free trade was a means of promoting peace. In *Rights of Man* he claims that, "The invention of commerce has arisen since those governments began and is the greatest approach towards universal civilization that has yet been made by any means not immediately flowing from moral principles. Whatever has a tendency to promote the civil intercourse of nations by an exchange of benefits, is a subject as worthy of philosophy as of politics"¹⁶. Paine saw commerce and trade as way to facilitate diplomatic relations and create a "pacific system, operating to cordialize" mankind. He saw economic interaction as a way to engage nations and create more open channels of communication which would prevent future misunderstandings or other causes of conflict. Commerce and trade could create mutual interests for either party, promoting peaceful interactions between nations.

Kant, also a supporter of economic interdependence, was nonetheless lacking the same utopian promise of Paine. Kant instead sees that states will turn to trade not for moral reasons of avoiding war but because of the interest to accumulate wealth. Kant speaks to this point, "the *spirit of commerce*...cannot exists side by side with war. And all of the powers (or means) at the disposal of the power of the state, *financial power* can be relied on the most"¹⁷ [Kant's emphasis]. According to Kant, it is in the states' (more specifically business men and financiers of that state) interest to preserve power through accumulation of wealth and that instead is what

¹⁵ Before the establishment of international institutions and Keynesianism policies, it could be arguing that liberalism didn't influence global politics at the same extent as realism during the periods of imperialism and colonialism. In other words, during those times the argument that states behavior was dictated by interest in material power was a more valid.

¹⁶ Paine, pp. 151

¹⁷ Kant, pp. 114

would incentive an alternative to war, a simple cost-benefit analysis. This understanding of economic interdependence is yet another characteristic of liberal theory and common practice of the liberal world order.

Lastly, we turn to the role liberal theory believes international institutions play in reducing military conflict. International institutions did not exist during the enlightenment era so there is little concrete reference to such by Paine or Kant, even though the latter did propose a loose federation of state as the most adequate institutionalization of international society. Daniel Deudney and John G. Ikenberry argue that international institutions enact laws and agreements to enforce cooperation and promote peace. International institutions play an important role in the liberal world order and are in many ways a main facilitator of these liberal principles in international affairs. They are responsible for pooling resources, creating and supporting common goals, providing a space for diplomacy, etc. Liberalism claims that international institutions increase the likelihood of cooperation because they facilitate security alliances, organized conflict mediation, and international agreements.

To conclude this section, for the sake of my critique, liberal theory can be characterized by four principles: human nature, democratic peace theory, economic interdependence as a means to reduce conflict, and international institutions as a means to reduce conflict. Most of these principles being first theorized by Kant and Paine, have provided a framework for the current liberal order in which our international system operates. In a brief historical analysis, we will now see how those principles have manifested themselves into the order we see today.

Historical Analysis of Liberal Ascendancy

The world order refers to a complex, multilayered, and multifaceted formation of actors: states, governing institutions, regimes, agreements, rules, norms, and so on. This complexity has

only grown. Most accounts trace liberal ascendancy to creation of the Westphalian international project. This project began in the 17th century, a period of constant struggle and war amongst great powers and increased interactions between states due to trade and the circulation of capital. In 1648, the Westphalian treaty was signed by European powers ending the thirty years war but more importantly, seeking a peaceful world order on the basis of “sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-intervention”¹⁸. A consensus was made to create a system of states that could operate peacefully on the basis of sovereignty because “states were the rightful political units for the establishment of legitimate rule”¹⁹. This consensus became a global force, among great western powers, who were committed to the liberal international project. Efforts were made to make the world more open and engage in mutually beneficial rule-based interactions to encourage open markets, multilateral institutions, cooperative security, and other sentiments of liberal theory.

In the late nineteenth century, Great Britain became a leading military and naval power. During this time, we also see the United States move away from inwardness and isolation. Both “great powers” emerged with ambitious economic and political mechanisms that embodied the liberal world vision. Learning from the worldwide depression of the 1930s, the Western powers prioritized the liberal principle of economic interdependence. Their goals became to promote open trade and stimulate capital flows while establishing a stable exchange rate system. Post-WWII economic institutions were utilized to support economic liberalism: Bretton Woods, the World Bank, IMF, GATT, WTO- all played key roles in the expansion of economic liberalism. I argue, like many IR scholars, that these institutions are the most powerful promoters of the liberal world order and therefore championed with its ascendancy.

¹⁸Ikenberry, G. John. “Why the Liberal World Order Will Survive.” pp.22

¹⁹Ikenberry, G. John. “Why the Liberal World Order Will Survive.” pp.22-23

For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was originally designed to establish a system of fixed exchange rates and with the United States and guaranteed currency convertibility. From the 1940s-1970s, the US guaranteed the stability of the system by fixing the value of the dollar against gold. Then, in 1972, this system collapsed when the United States announced that it would no longer guarantee a system of fixed exchange rates. This decision was revised in 1976 when IMF formalized the system of floating exchange rates, a policy more consistent with economic liberalization.

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) is another great example of how international institutions helped establish a liberal world order. The GATT were a series of multilateral trade negotiations designed to stimulate trade by lowering trade benefits that saw trade as the engine for growth and economic development. It sought out non-discrimination in trade by establishing the most favored nation (MFN) principle in which states agreed to give the same treatment to all other GATT members as they give to their best (most-favored) trading partner. Principles and policies like these further demonstrated the placement of liberal ideology in moving forward with free trade.

Moreover, political international institutions were also used to establish a capitalist world order. The League of Nations was initiated by US President Woodrow Wilson and established by the victors of World War I, calling for an organization to represent the international community. The league of roughly 58 members dealt with a multitude of transnational issues like collective security and arms control but ultimately failed in preventing the escalation of axis powers like Japan, Germany and Italy. Shortly after the creation of Bretton Woods and other economic institutions, western powers sought to address security concerns in wake of the tragic world wars. In 1941, Great Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Atlantic Charter. The purpose was to create comprehensive set of goals

to address the failures of the League of Nations and establish a new world order. By 1945, they had spearheaded the creation of the United Nations (UN), a general international organization meant to (1) maintain international peace and security, (2) develop friendly relations among nations based on principles of equal rights and self-determination, (3) achieve international cooperation over economic, social, cultural or humanitarian problems, and (4) promote human rights and fundamental freedoms²⁰. These goals of the charter were supported by liberal principles like sovereign equality, peaceful settlements of disputes, non-interference, and others. Overtime, the UN gained more global participation. With 193 members, it is the clearest example of how international organizations pushed for the success of the liberal international project and established a liberal world order.

Lastly, before moving on I want to acknowledge the role that non-governmental organizations or NGOs²¹ play in establishing the liberal world order. NGOs function similarly to IOs, but without governmental influence, although they may receive government funding. They are equally founded on the basis of addressing important issues. Non-State actors in general can include nongovernmental organizations (NGO), transnational networks, foundations, and multinational corporations, though they are not sovereign or have access to the same kinds of power and resources as wealthy states. NGOs are generally private organizations whose members are individuals or associates that come together to achieve a common purpose, often oriented to a public good. Herein lies the power of the NGO. They play a unique role with a variety of functions. They can advocate for specific policies and offer alternative channels. They can mobilize mass publics and work at the grassroots level in mobilizing individuals to act. In certain cases, they can even take the place of states in influencing various countries and public institutions. Most NGOs rely on soft power, like credible information, expertise, and moral

²⁰ Thompson. "UN Systems"

²¹ Kantrowitz, Ricki E. "United Nations: Definitions and Terms."

authority to attract the attention and admiration of governments and the public. Of course, there are limitations to the power of NGOs like lack of economic resources. NGOs, like other actors, are considered to be less altruistic than supposed- self-interested, self-aggrandizing, concerned with their own narrow agendas, hierarchical rather than democratic, more worried about financial gains than achieving progressive social purposes. The role NGOs play in legitimizing the liberal world order, like IOs, depends on the critical question of accountability. A closer look at the *effectiveness* of international institutions demonstrates how the mechanisms used to maintain the liberal world order have failed to solve our most pressing international crisis: climate change.

Chapter 2: International Agreements: IOs Tools for Conflict Resolution

Although these moves are important for raising awareness and reducing some emissions, “it’s all pretty small relative to governments around the world setting a forceful climate policy.”²²

- Michael Greenstone, Economics professor, University of Chicago

IR theory defines international organizations as formal bodies that set rules that govern how actors should cooperate within a certain issue area. States create IOs to support interdependence and solve cooperation problems²³. As acknowledged by IR scholars Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore²⁴, theories like the prisoner’s dilemma²⁵ cause states to be constantly worried about cheating, causing a need for accountability and enforcement mechanisms. These mechanisms

²²Maizland, Lindsey. “Global Climate Agreements: Successes and Failures.”

²³ Abbott, Kenneth W, and Duncan Snidal. “Why States Act through Formal International Organizations, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.” pp. 485–514.

²⁴ Michael Barnett & Martha Finnemore. “Political Approaches.” pp. 42-53

²⁵ “The prisoner’s dilemma is a **fundamental example** in game theory where rational actors (in this case, the United States, the Afghan government and polity, the Taliban, Pakistan, and regional actors) fail to cooperate even if they would benefit from doing so. In this example, each actor would benefit from a peaceful outcome in Afghanistan but may perceive unacceptable short-term costs associated with that outcome.”

help IO's work more efficiently, reduce the costs of cooperation, aggregate power and resources, and develop and spread shared norms within the international community.

As established, the liberal world order uses IO's to constrain states and cause cooperation. This is primarily done through the use of international agreements. *In* order to understand the faults in international agreements it's important to establish the foundation of those agreements: cooperation. Looking to at Keohane's definition of cooperation, it exists "when actors adjust their behavior of the actual or anticipated preference of others, through a process of policy coordination."²⁶ Cooperation occurs when states change their policies and/or behaviors to reduce negative reactions from other actors. This theory relies on the concepts of shared interest and relative gains. [See Game Theory]²⁷. IOs attempt to force accountability by binding common interests where they exist and forming around collective goods [see Tragedy of Commons]²⁸. Collective goods refer to something available to all member states regardless of individual contribution. In order to avoid negative consequences of the behaviors of others, states need to develop strategies to control the use of these goods²⁹. IOs contribute to these strategies by facilitating international bargaining, facilitating the formation of a transnational bodies and networks, sometimes leading to common expectations of state's behaviors. For states, IOs both enlarge the possibilities of foreign policy and add to the constraints under which states conduct and implement foreign policy.

Climate Change and Ineffective International Agreements

²⁶ Milner, Helen. "International Theories of Cooperation among Nations: Strengths and Weaknesses." pp. 466–496

²⁷ Game Theory: Since states operate on national interests, facilitating cooperation can lead to a Prisoner's Dilemma regarding relative gains in international agreements. States are constantly worried about "cheating" need incentives to cooperate., interdependence among these transnational actors and support from institutions allow IOs to constrain states and cause cooperation.

²⁸ "The Tragedy of the Commons": A group of herders share a common grazing area...if each herder attempts to maximize his own gain, the collectivity suffers, and eventually, all individuals suffer"

²⁹ Hardin, Garrett. "The Tragedy of the Commons." pp. 1243–1248

In 1997, the 193 members of the United Nations took on historical initiative to globally to better acknowledge climate change. The Kyoto Protocol was the first global commitment to slowing greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, since its ratification in 2005, commitment has dwindled and lacked effectiveness. So, what went wrong? Essentially, the Kyoto Protocol was based on the idea of trading emissions, where industrialized nations not only have target specific goals to reduce emissions, but nations can offset cuts by “buying emissions credits from other countries”³⁰. This mechanism focuses on eliminating emissions where it is most cost-effective. “It does not matter where emissions are reduced, as long as they are removed from the atmosphere.”³¹ This provides an economic incentive for developing countries to cut emissions while investing in green energy. However, this approach does not place any responsibility on the industrialized nations that lead in fossil fuel production. Shortly after its inception, the lack of commitment and overall corruption of these member states became extremely apparent. This broad UN agreement quickly lost traction and despite its relatively universal acceptance, ultimately failed.

Then in 2015, after more political struggle in climate crisis solutions, the international community tried again with the Paris Accords. Again, a consensus emerged that world leaders could not allow for an unchecked rise in emissions. The agreement asks for a broad commitment of all emitting countries to cut emissions, assist developing nations in climate mitigation efforts, and create an accountable and transparent network towards individual and collective climate initiatives. 197 members are formal signatories, the only notable exclusions being Russia, Turkey and Iran.³² However, as of June 1st, 2017, United States’ President Donald Trump has pulled out of the Paris Accord. This action, although not formal until November 4th of 2020,

³⁰ Victor, David G. “The Collapse of the Kyoto Protocol and the Struggle to Slow Global Warming.”

³¹ “What Is the Kyoto Protocol.” *United Nations Climate Change*

³² Denchak, Melissa. “Paris Climate Agreement: Everything You Need to Know.”

undoubtedly results in crucial international ramifications. But, despite the broad international consensus, experts say that the Paris Accord stills falls short in more ways than one. First, the commitments made by nations desperately fall short of a 2% net decrease in emissions. According to a UN Emissions Gap Report from 2018³³, even if the countries follow-through on their individual commitments, there will still be an expected 3% increase in Earth's temperatures by the end of the century. Secondly, there is no global tax on carbon resulting in a lack of incentive for countries to be held accountable³⁴. Furthermore, if countries do fail to achieve their outlined commitments, they will not be punished. Even with required reporting and target submissions, countries who refused to adequately lower their emissions face no repercussions³⁵. Finally, there is little to no framework regarding sustainable development, despite research showing that including methods to sustainable development is a crucial part of climate agreements, as it enables an entire energy system transformation, a fundamental aspect of the Paris Agreement³⁶.

The faults of the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement are not unique. They are connected to an inherent tradeoff in international agreements between Breadth and Depth³⁷. Imagine that all international agreements exist on a spectrum from deep, complex, and requiring a lot sacrifice, to easily adaptable, widely accepted, and low-commitment. The challenge of international agreements is that they in fact need to be internationally agreed upon. Agreements at this level must be easily amenable to states interests, provide incentive to commit, result in little costs, and gain widespread consensus. But the problem of climate change by definition goes against powerful interests, is misaligned with existing incentives, and requires immediate sacrifice with

³³ UN Environment, 2018, *Emissions Gap Report 2018*.

³⁴ Brown, Marilyn A. "Exit Paris Accord, Enter Carbon Tax?"

³⁵ Denchak, Melissa. "Paris Climate Agreement: Everything You Need to Know."

³⁶ McCollum, D, and W Zhou. "Energy Investment Needs for Fulfilling the Paris Agreement and Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals."

³⁷ Thompson, Alex. "Current Events Review."

seemingly far-off, but long-term benefits. Additionally, it requires collective action, which means extremely high levels of commitment and widespread participation. But how do states commit to that kind of action, when in their perspective, there is little incentive to do so?³⁸

This tradeoff problem more refers to a cost-benefit analysis for developing vs. non-developing nations. States that have already industrialized and most likely had the biggest contribution to the emission of fossil fuels have less incentive to address climate change. They are wealthier, meaning they have more options to curb the effects of climate change and benefit from the dependence on other states for continued exports, productions, and consumption. The developing nations, those who have had less of a role in releasing emissions, need to industrialize in which the use fossil fuels over “green energy” would be more profitable and easier to develop. This isn’t by any means the whole story-- the interests among different types of states is varied and complex. This complexity however, is what makes widespread commitment so difficult to achieve. In particular to climate change, state also has the “two-level” problem to consider: the state must negotiate internationally while also satisfying domestic political demands. Many domestic interests must be considered, and the implementation of the agreement needs to be enacted by national, subnational, private, and individual sectors of the state. This level of specificity within each organizational level is what makes a deep solution so difficult to be incentive-compatible for nations.

Although this trade-off is widely recognized by international relations³⁹ scholars, the terminology is rather new. Alex Thompson⁴⁰ identifies various roadblocks of international climate politics. His claim about “distributive conflict” is a nod to the breadth-depth trade off.

³⁸ Of course, not all states see that there is little incentive. Those strongly affected by climate change are of course the most compelled to find and timely and effective solution.

³⁹ Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change, “greater participation in climate change agreements...improves environmental effectiveness by covering up a larger share of global emissions and reducing potential leakage to non-participating areas. An international climate agreement regime might achieve depth (ambition of emissions reduction) and breadth (of participation) in different sequence. Chapter 13, pp 1014

⁴⁰ Thompson, Alex. “Management Under Anarchy: The International Politics of Climate Change.”

He argues that "...[in] distribution of costs and benefits across countries—there are winners and losers as a result of the choice made". Here, he points at emission reduction targets, a key point of climate action agreements- as a direct indicator of winners and losers of these deep agreements. When making the decision to assign emission quotas, "overall emissions, per capita emissions, emissions compared to GNP, emissions per land area, historical emissions, etc."—creates obvious winners and losers...[that] hurt developing countries. There is inescapable block present in international agreements in the context of finding a climate change solution. Yet, we continue to attempt to hold these institutions accountable and look to them for answers. Why do we place so much faith an international order that has failed us?

Chapter 3: Capitalism, Climate Change, and Neoliberalism

"We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art, and very often in our art, the art of words.

- Ursula K. Le Guin

Capitalism is inextricably linked to the climate crisis and effectively works against any adequate response to climate change. An international agreement that is both deep in its commitments and broad in its participation is not possible under the current capitalist system. Each time the liberal world order has attempted to produce a global climate solution, we have been faced with failure and inadequacy. The climate crisis although complex and in constant acceleration can be traced to the implications of our capitalist society and our neoliberal ideology.

What is Capitalism?

Capitalism is the economic system currently ruling our international order. But simply calling it an economic system does not come close to demonstrating just how embedded it is in our lives. It is virtually inescapable. We've assimilated and internalized a capitalistic mindset that teaches us greed, exploitation, and ruthless competition is not only good for society but natural for us to seek as humans. To define such a complex system in length is impossible so I rely on the argument reflected by Fred Magdoff and John B. Foster in *An Environmentalists Guide to Capitalism* (2011) from the Monthly Review School. Although my arguments do not precisely coincide with their most prominent scholar (Foster), this piece offers an essential understanding of the relationship between capitalism and the environment.

Magdoff and Foster define capitalism as “an economic and social system in which the owners of capital (or capitalists) appropriate the surplus product generated by the direct producers (or workers), leading to the accumulation of capital by the owners”⁴¹. In other words, within a capitalist system those who own capital rely on labor exploitation in order to accumulate more capital. Karl Marx defines exploitation as the “fact that the producer only receives a portion of the newly produced value that he or she creates—regardless of whether wages are high or low or working conditions good or bad”⁴². This particular definition allows us to assert that exploitation is not necessarily an allusion to low wages or bad working conditions, but simply an inherent part of capitalism. Production--more pointedly production of commodities by way of laborers-- exists within a market to generate profit and continue to accumulate capital for the capitalists.

⁴¹ Magdoff, Fred, and John Bellamy Foster, pp. 15

⁴² Heinrich, Michael. “An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital.” pp. 47

Capitalism is a “never-ending quest for profits and accumulation” by the means of production and circulation of commodities. In other words, under capitalism, the goals will always be profit and accumulation by means of production. Because these institutions are committed to capitalism, this is the system they will uphold. More critically, this can be exemplified by the common depiction of an exchange process: Commodity (C) is exchanged for money (M), to purchase another commodity, (C). “C-M-C”. Now, as articulated by Magdoff and Foster, economists like Marx and John Maynard Keynes saw the flaw in this interpretation of capitalism. A more accurate description instead would be as follows: “M-C-M' in which money is used to purchase the inputs to produce a commodity, which is then sold for more money or M' (M + Am). The object, in other words, is to end up with *more money* than one started with, that is, surplus value or profits. Such an exchange process has no end, but simply goes on and on without limit. Thus, in the next round exchange takes the form of M'-C-M'', which leads in the round after that to M''-C-M''', and so on in an incessant drive to accumulation at ever higher levels. Capital, understood in this way, is self-expanding value. Capitalism thus recognizes no limits to its own self-expansion— there is no amount of profit, no amount of wealth, and no amount of consumption that is either "enough" or "too much."⁴³ M-C-M functions as a “self-expanding value”. With little to no restrictions, there is no cap on wealth, profit, or consumption in the face of economic expansion. Herein lies the paradox of a capitalistic society, an economic system that operates upon the premise of a limitless nature, does so within the limits of nature.

Environmental Implications

By definition, capitalism requires the accumulation not just of capital but of energy and resources. The ceaseless production and exploitation enacted by capitalism creates a nature of

⁴³ Heinrich, Michael. “An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital”, pp. 86

growth that pays heavy social and economic costs. These costs amount to widespread social and economic inequality, a consistently unequal distribution of wealth, and the marginalization of any strides for social and environmental justice⁴⁴. This happens primarily at the hand of competition, another key characteristic of capitalism. Competition enforces the accumulation and economic expansion that results in environmental harm. As defined by Magdoff & Foster, “competition occurs primarily through cost-reduction and the sale effort rather than lowering prices...[therefore] a corporation that does not grow and increase its market share will indeed die”⁴⁵. As a result of this push towards growth by competition, the system becomes concentrated and centralized on production, shifting past simple price competition but competition in all forms of the market. So, what are the social and environmental implications on of this competition-based system that prioritizes growth?

Magdoff & Foster point to “resource competition”⁴⁶ as growing cause of environmental conflict. As we know, our energy comes from finite natural resources: coal, water, x, mineral deposits etc., are all used in one industry or another, which means they are all in demand. Even though complete depletion of these nonrenewable resources is dependent on different variables like size and rate of extraction and not likely to occur for hundreds of years, it is not that far off to suggest that decreased availability is right around the corner and already poses a threat to those industries reliant on these resources. These are long term concerns that, once again, are not being prioritized because of capitalism. Those who control the extraction of these resources (business owners, corporations, etc.) work in the short term because of unpredictable and competitive business cycles. Actors in the market don’t want to wait for profits and are only interested in short-term returns. As a result, actors “largely ignore the natural limits to their

⁴⁴ Magdoff, Fred, and John Bellamy Foster, pp. 16

⁴⁵ Magdoff, Fred, and John Bellamy Foster, pp. 18

⁴⁶ Magdoff, Fred, and John Bellamy Foster, pp. 29

activities—as if there were an unlimited supply of natural resources for exploitation”⁴⁷.

Collectively, all of these capitalists are following their self-interest, and having any regard or consciousness for the environment simply is not profitable and only hinders one’s ability to accumulate capital. This behavior is propped up by companies and governments and leads to the exhaustion of exploited resources. In this system, environmental harm is inevitable. Furthermore, this environmental degradation is most harmful to the poor and the underrepresented. So, those most responsible for the harm they are causing, are the one’s experiencing the least of its affect. This is not a surprising fact. Capitalism’s constant striving towards accumulation of wealth has inadvertently also produced an enormous amount of poverty. This unequal distribution of wealth is essential to exploitation, the mechanism of capital accumulation.

As previously identified, ideology⁴⁸ of the capitalist system forces us to act in self-interest. Individuals serve the market and their value is determined by their capacity to participate. In other words, lack of capital equates to lack of value within the system. The poor and the marginalized, have the least capacity to participate and their status as such is maintained by the system. Climate change affects us all to a certain degree but our ability to reduce the harm of its effects, as a part of the system, depends on our value within it.

In the same way that capitalism forces individuals to act as consumers within a system interested in growth and accumulation, states reflect this behavior and make decisions on a national and international level in efforts to strengthen their corporations, increase exports, and expand their markets. The liberal world order built on the basis of this capitalist system in which states should be able to engage in peaceful relations centered around free trade and open markets, avowedly because it’s mutually beneficial and will maintain peaceful order. Instead, they operate for and within capitalist economies that perpetuate social and environmental harm. Magdoff &

⁴⁷ Magdoff, Fred, and John Bellamy Foster, pp. 29

⁴⁸ Ideology: ‘a set of closely-related beliefs or ideas, or even attitudes, characteristic of a group or community. (Plamentaz, Ideology)

Foster point out the following examples of how wealthy nations have acted in self-interest to assist business: “colonial adventures, such as the British forcing the Chinese government to sign the 1842 Treaty of Nanking, which included eliminating protective tariffs that made imports from Britain and its colonies prohibitively expensive; U.S. imperial adventures, such as the 1953 overthrow of the Iranian government that resulted in significant U.S. corporate control of Iran's oil; assisting development of new technologies, as the U.S. government does through defense research and development; direct subsidies to industries, such as the oil industry and biofuel production”⁴⁹.

All of these reflect decisions that promote capitalism are made by wealthy and powerful actors in the international system, i.e. leaders of the liberal world order. This, as a consequence, is not a critique on capitalism, it is a critique on the international system. So, the question is: How has capitalism become so embedded in every facet of our global society, that it is inherently a part of our world order and the main cause of our inability to overcome the problem of breadth v. depth? Why would a world order that champions democracy and economic independence, facilitate a system that is unrepresentative and not mutually beneficial? It clearly does not represent the interests of all member states as no one is interested in being on the losing side of capitalism. It is unequal, unfair, and unjust. Turns out, therein lies a huge flaw with the concept of democracy within the capitalist system and that is exemplified by neoliberalism. In this next section, I will claim that neoliberalism, an ideology morphed out of the dangers of capitalism, has led us astray and fundamentally changed the role of democracy within our international system and in turn, our international agreements.

Influence of Neoliberal Ideology

⁴⁹ Magdoff, Fred, and John Bellamy Foster, pp. 40

Neoliberalism has become the ideology dominating much of Western governance. IR theory defines neoliberalism as “an economic theory and an ideological conviction that supports maximizing the economic freedom for individuals and thus reducing the amount of state intervention to the bare minimum”⁵⁰. For the sake of this paper, it is not only an economic theory, but an ideological stronghold on the liberal world order. In effect, neoliberalism has reoriented almost every non-economic aspect of life into mere economic terms. Most people begin the story of neoliberalism in the 1980s with the free market policies brought forth by Ronald Reagan and Margret Thatcher. But the story of the ideology itself is rather complex and cloaked by multiple perspectives. In order to demonstrate how neoliberalism derived from capitalism and expanded its grasp into every facet of society, we much follow the time-line of the ideology from its inception, while engaging with actual neoliberal policies that display its influence over institutions and individuals.

The foundation was laid in the 1930s by Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich A. Hayek. Both men are regarded as the two most important Austrian economist of the twentieth century and their thinking is consistent with liberal ideology. They considered international institutions to be effective nurturers of individual progression within society but were skeptical of their ability to strengthen the market society. Although they are often seen as two distinct sides of the ideology, Hayek is generally credited with the development of neoliberalism. His ideas about the role of the state within a market society and how certain political conditions were necessary to ensuring the progression of that society would eventually lay the foundation for neoliberal ideology and construct a revolutionary role of the market within all levels of society.

According to Hayek, if we make the science of the market an objective truth, then economic competition is our only reality and we should place all human activity under the guide

⁵⁰ Wikan, Vilde Skorpen. “What Is 'Neoliberalism', and How Does It Relate to Globalization?”

of wealth, value, exchange, cost, and price. Our existence becomes an economic calculation. An evolution of Adam Smith's "invisible hand", Hayek applied Adam Smith's concept of the "invisible hand" within the market to a world view. In his version of the international system, human activity in its entirety would be an economic calculation. A "master concepts of wealth, value, exchange, and especially price"⁵¹. Price was a particularly important element as it caused scarce resources to be collected efficiently and was managed by supply and demand, requiring the need for markets to remain open, free, and competitive. All the typical aspects of society that fight against oppression and exploitation were absent from Hayek's theory. It was simply, keep the market free at all costs. The "neo" in respect to classical liberalism, says that the free market "must be won politically" and the state must "be engineered to support the free market continuously. As a result, society organizes human beings as "profit-and-loss calculators"⁵². The goal was to weaken the welfare state, always cut taxes, and deregulate as it was "a way of reordering social reality, and of rethinking our status as individuals".

The seed of neoliberal ideology grew during the period of decolonization. During this time, the international system was attempting to restrain the power of the post-colonial masses, foster market freedom and uphold economic exploitation despite the creation of newly sovereign states. This meant colonies needed to be kept available to the open market. However, this did not seem like the most attractive option for former colonies who saw imperialism as a result of capitalism. In order to prevent the new nations from adopting protectionist policies and closing themselves off from an open market economy, neoliberal thinkers worked to reframe imperialism and capitalism. Champions of imperialism attacked Marxist theories of anti-imperialism (made popular by Leninism and the growing socialist sentiment within the world). Lenin described imperialism as "a phenomenon of monopoly capitalism and the territorial

⁵¹ Abraham-Hamanoiel, Alejandro. "Liberalism in Neoliberal Times: Dimensions, Contradictions, Limits."

⁵² Monbiot, George. "Neoliberalism – the Ideology at the Root of All Our Problems."

division into financial and industrial cartels and competing monopoly blocks”⁵³. For Lenin and other Marxists thinkers it was simple—imperialism, by way of great power rivalry and wars, was endemic to capitalism. In protection of capitalism, neoliberal thinkers rebutted by suggesting that imperialism was not a product of capitalism, but of politics, a political phenomenon that occurs when you over regulate the market. A member of Mises private seminar from the Austrian school Joseph Schumpeter, rejected Marx and argued that the existence of pre-capitalist institutions (look back to this section in Capitalism), limited the beneficial effects of “pure” unabridged capitalism. In this view, capitalism facilitates productive labor that would otherwise be spent of war and violence, those pesky problems of political intrusion, and instead offers no room for the faults of imperialist impulses. In this assumption, capitalism then is not flawed but was simply not strong enough to alter the mentality of the pre-capitalist world order. This notion was made powerful as it worked to instill market discipline and submission on post-colonial governments through of guise of mutually beneficial economic relations.

However, Mises and Hayek’s theories were not popular enough to beat out the ruling economic ideology of John Maynard Keynes. Keynes’ economic theory found in *General Theory*, published in 1936, revolutionized economic thinking on a fundamental level. Keynes’s theory still advocated for free markets but with an important assumption: that in order for the market to operate properly, it must be at full employment. An important distinction of Keynesian policy was the idea of aggregate demand as the sum of consumption, investment, and government spending. His economic policies included government spending as a way to guarantee full employment, cutting wages in order to decrease income, consumption, and aggregate demand, and offsetting any benefits to output anything the lower price of labor might

⁵³ Lenin, Vladimir. “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism”.

have contributed”⁵⁴. In general, Keynes argued that the government had the ability and therefore the responsibility to enact deficit spending during economic downturns in order to maintain full employment.

In the postwar era, Keynesianism was the driving force of economic policy. The dramatic rift between western democracies and the Soviet Bloc resulted in the emergence of a bipolar system. For the western democracies, they utilized capitalism, and in order to prevent a second Great Depression, a major goal of theirs was to regulate capital and establish global economic rules to act as a safety net for the pitfalls of the market. Here we see the development of those international institutions of the liberal world order (Bretton Woods, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, etc.), as mechanisms to facilitate these new economic regulations. These institutions fundamentally operated on the ideology of Keynesianism and it did not seem like anything would be changing soon. The excitement over Hayek had been lost to the logical thinking of Keynesian policies.

Then, crisis struck. In the 1970s, these western democracies experienced an economic downturn and in replacement of Keynesian policies, neoliberalism was lying in wait. “After Margaret Thatcher and Reagan took power, the rest of the package soon followed: massive tax cuts for the rich, the crushing of trade unions, deregulation, privatization, outsourcing and competition in public services”⁵⁵. Global governance followed suit as institutions like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Maastricht Treaty, and World Trade Organization imposed neoliberalist policies, often without democratic consent. Naomi Klein⁵⁶ recounts the Western powers means of implementation. According to Klein, many governments used moments of crises to impose unpopular policies while the people were distracted. Examples

⁵⁴ Liberty Fund. “John Maynard Keynes.”

⁵⁵ Metcalf, Stephen. “Neoliberalism: The Idea That Swallowed the World.”

⁵⁶ Klein, Naomi. “This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate.”.

include Pinochet's coup in Chile (1973), the Iraq War (2003), and Hurricane Katrina (2001), which Friedman described as "an opportunity to radically reform the educational system"⁵⁷ in New Orleans. The claws of neoliberalism dug into our domestic and international sphere. This was additionally harmful as no one calls neoliberal policies by their name, so the phenomenon grew unrecognized and the effect of were poisonous.

Chapter 4: Why does this matter?

"The lesson from all this is not that people won't sacrifice in the face of the climate crisis.

It's that they have had it with our culture of lopsided sacrifice in which individuals are asked to pay higher prices for supposedly green choices while large corporations dodge regulation and not only refuse to change their behavior but charge ahead with ever more polluting activities."

- Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*

Neoliberal ideology would tell us that to solve any political crisis, people must exercise power through their spending. However, we know that in our capitalist society, not everyone has the same capacity to spend. So, if our spending equates to our votes and our representative abilities, then this version of democracy is counting *a lot of people out*. The central principle of democracy does not exist anymore when your political influence is equated to your wealth. The danger of neoliberal policies are direct attacks on democracy as they reduce our participatory power to purchasing power; money talks. Your power as an individual comes from being a consumer, and democratic practices outside of economic behavior becomes obsolete.

⁵⁷ Metcalf, Stephen. "Neoliberalism: The Idea That Swallowed the World."

“Neoliberals have systemically dismantled the ways you could participate politically so that you only can impact broader systems with your dollar”⁵⁸.

This idea is best articulated by Wendy Brown’s *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*⁵⁹. According to Brown’s assessment, neoliberalism is a “governing rationality through which everything is economized”. Even non-wealth generating fields like learning, dating, or exercising is assimilated into market term. Above all, people are translated to human capital and must “constantly tend to their own present and future value.” Overall Brown claims that neoliberalism has profoundly damaged democratic practices, cultures, and institutions. Here’s why: assuming Brown’s rationality is true, democratic values become economic rather than political. Liberty is reduced to freedom of the market rather than civil freedoms, unrestricted by governmental bodies or standards. “Equality as a matter of legal standing and of participation in shared rule is replaced with idea of an equal right to compete in a world where there are always winners and losers.” Neoliberalism’s economization of democratic elements of law, culture, and society become geared to prioritizing the free market. Freedom of the market relies on individual activity, not that of the people, making popular sovereignty irrelevant. Neoliberalism redefines citizens to be consumers whose political power is determined by buying and selling, a mechanism that “rewards merit and punishes inefficiency”. Things that democracy aims to prevent like inequality are essential to maintaining this system, meaning it inherently avails injustice. Neoliberalism gaslights the poor and calls equality counterproductive.

Neoliberal Ideology and the Climate Change Action

As an ideology, neoliberalism institutionalizes the harmful mindset of capitalism. Defined by this system, the total worth of humans is their role as consumers, and we are forced

⁵⁸ Glavan, Kate. “Week One — Capitalism, Socialism, and Neoliberalism.”

⁵⁹ Brown, Wendy. “Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution”

to act in self-interest fueled by competition. This mindset has harmful implications on our interactions with each and the environment. Magdoff, F, & Foster acknowledge the effects of the ideology on human behavior, “Capitalism leads to a loss of connection with nature, fellow humans, and community. The self-centered consumer culture fostered by the system means that people lose close connections with nature—which is seen predominantly as a source of materials for enhancing the exploitation of other people and other communities”⁶⁰. It is critical to understand that neoliberal ideology relies on individual greed to drive the capitalist market and forces us to believe the lie that more and more consumption will make us happier. When your capacity to consume in society determines your worth, naturally you will strive towards growth and accumulation. Wealthy people, the winners of this game, are seen to be in those positions because of hard work and dedication whereas the poor are lazy, and insufficient. But as we know there is not a level playing field and there will always be those exploiting and those exploited. By individualizing society in this way, neoliberalism obscures any sense of commonality among human and environmental needs. With this ideology, any results of the system that provides for basic human needs are convenient accidents.

At the international level, neoliberal ideology has sunk its claws into the liberal world order. By way of its foundational principles, it is not surprising that the state would be on the side of capital. However, that commitment has only been further exacerbated by neoliberalism, resulting in a continual battle between addressing international concerns (like human rights or sustainable development) and promoting neoliberal institutions. This is especially seen in international agreements regarding environmental issues, which require direct attacks on the capitalist system. Noted by Magdoff & Foster, “Although the capitalist system [is] able to carry out limited reforms in relation to the environment...such reforms are curtailed long before they

⁶⁰ Magdoff, Fred, and John Bellamy Foster, pp. 34

reach the point of threatening the economic/social system as a whole. As a result, reforms stop short of addressing the root problems, and the environmental crisis continues to worsen”⁶¹. Most governments and environmentalists are unable to develop a climate change solution within a capitalistic-economy. How can we imagine environmental solutions that undermine capitalism endorsed by the market? It is not feasible. So, we end up with ineffective attempts of “green capitalism”, seen at the individual, state, and international level.

Individually, consumers are met with greenwashing, a method companies use to veil their blatant exploitation of workers and natural resources behind the guise of “sustainable materials” and “ethical” practices. One step past this claim and you’ll see the endless holes in their “environmentally friendly” production. States back these corporations and companies, knowing it will serve their economic interests at home and abroad. A great example of this are oil companies like Shell and Chevron. With the support of the state, they completely dodged the blame of environmental exploitation during the early years of the climate change movement. Oil companies took a page right out of the book on neoliberalism and spun the story on the consumer, creating terms like “carbon-footprint” to individualize the harm being done on the environment.

Internationally, addressing the climate crisis often involved failed regulations to curb emissions. One example is the “cap-and-trade” method, which places a cap or limit on the allowed level of greenhouse gas emissions and then extorts a fee that allows industries to exceed that limit. For James Hansen cap-and-trade is the “temple of doom” and “worse than nothing” as it “prevents effective action directly limiting carbon through regulations and a properly designed tax, while giving people the impression that something is being done.”⁶² These attempts at an implementation of “green-capitalism” are really anti-solutions to the climate crisis as they simply

⁶¹ Magdoff, Fred, and John Bellamy Foster, pp. 42

⁶² Magdoff, Fred, and John Bellamy Foster, pp. 53

continue to perpetuate the system that causes such environmental degradation. Each method proposed, whether it be more efficient or cleaner energy, more effective regulations, cap-and-trade of emissions, or carbon taxes, offer no escape from a system based on exponential growth, accumulation, and exploitation.

The reason that international agreements fall into this trap has been wonderfully articulated by Naomi Klein in her book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. Klein claims that the reversal of neoliberal institutions requires undesired deep commitments that lie nowhere in states' interest. According to Klein, after the 1960s and 70s a counterrevolution was launched against rising popular beliefs in socialism and aggressive Keynesian policies. This counterrevolution [neoliberalism], existed under the guise of liberalism and was promoted by the leaders of the liberal world order, was marketed to be the “collapse of communism, [the] ideological catalyst to declare: history was officially over and there was “no alternative” to their market fundamentalism. They systematically locked in the corporate liberation project through open opportunity of political turmoil and large-scale economic crisis, upheld by free trade agreements and WTO membership.”⁶³ This demonstrates how neoliberal ideology was so manifested into the liberal world order that there was believed to be “no alternative” to this kind of market system. In other words, a climate change solution would “require heavy duty interventions; sweeping bans on polluting activities, deep subsidies for green alternatives, pricey penalties for violations, new taxes, new public work programs, and reversals of privatizations.”⁶⁴

For example, deep international agreements would require decentralization and limits on industry. This is a direct contradiction to neoliberalism which benefits from boundless extraction by industry and centralization by corporations. Decentralization and limits on industry are becoming more imbedded in new and ambitious climate solutions that set emission targets, and

⁶³ Klein, pp. 36

⁶⁴ Klein, pp. 37

other national policies. However, there is a strong lack of commitment to these solutions as they challenge the neoliberal commitment to capitalism. Capitalism functions within a system of “ruthless expansion”⁶⁵, either through means of production or consumption, where wealth is concentrated among the elite or ruling class, at an extreme ecological and human cost. Decentralization and equal distribution of wealth would not only reduce that cost but are not possible under a capitalist system. These democracies under the LWO refuse to abandon this commitment to capitalism and have yet to find alternatives to the injustices of the market system. We are already seeing this ideological battle play out in several states. Several governments with liberal and progressive ideas rely on limitless environmental harm and therefore cannot see the benefit in a system that prevents the spoils of extraction. The need for a complex intervention, proves that our institutions have become so dependent and committed to neoliberal ideology and harmful extractivism, that to revert from these methods would hurt businesses and corporations that profit from this system, and therefore could never reach the adequate support required for deep international agreements.

It has been made clear in the arguments from Magdoff & Foster, Klein, and my own conclusions about the role of capitalism and neoliberal ideology within the liberal world order, that any climate crisis oriented international agreement will ultimately fail because of refusal to adequately dismantle the systems in place that cause environmental harm. The international community’s commitment to capitalism has resulted in a system of production and consumption that: pollutes the environment but does not meet universal basic human needs; operates on the basis of limitless expansion and extraction within a pool of limited resources; enhances and perpetuates inequality at the individual, state, and international level; promotes and rewards an ideology that dehumanizes interactions between each other and the environment. Clearly, the

⁶⁵ Klein, pp. 138

profit motive needs to be removed from the climate crisis equation. Some countries solutions have attempted to eliminate a capitalist motive from their climate change solution. In developing countries like the Philippines, Kenya, and Bangladesh where they climate change poses the biggest threat⁶⁶, demands for this shift are already being made. However, these calls to stray away from the capitalist motive are underrepresented and ignored by the international institutions who perpetuate the very problem we are dealing with.

An effective climate solution therefore goes beyond satisfying the bread v. depth problem within international agreements. We need collective action towards sustainable human development, which means “enough for everyone and no more”. This must exist outside of the nature of a capitalist system. This requires a revolutionary change in the way we do *everything*. I will now make the claim for *Collective Locality*, a call for an ideological shift that transforms our social interactions and transcends the perpetual violence of capitalism on the environment.

Chapter 5: Collective Locality

“our economic system and our planetary system are now at war. Or, more accurately, our economy is at war with many forms of life on earth, including human life. What the climate needs to avoid collapse is a contraction in humanity’s use of resources; what our economic model demands to avoid collapse is unfettered expansion. Only one of these sets of rules can be changed, and it’s not the laws of nature.”

- Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*

It is no longer a question of whether or not climate change is a problem worth our time. It is, decidedly, the biggest problem facing the planet and requires global action in unprecedented

⁶⁶ Klein, pp. 87

ways. If we were to follow the methods of our current international order, we would continue to pass the ball to the international institutions to cooperate and find a solution that represents our global interests. Well, we have done that and where have we ended up? With climate policy that can only be compared to the Titanic, a greatly flawed international order, now sinking under a capitalist system, destroyed by interests that undermine any solution towards social and environmental justice. The liberal world order's commitment to capitalism and neoliberal ideology contradict its principles of peaceful co-existence and democracy. Our society's capacity to fulfill basic human needs has been economized and equality has become counterproductive.

Under the current system any effort to enforce real mechanisms for equality and environmental protections work against the goal of capitalism and are not prioritized. If there is true equality there is no need for competition which we know fuels growth under capitalism. In the face of climate change, the continuity of neoliberal ideology and compliance under a capitalistic system is the anti-solution. This "business as usual" approach requires individualism, benefits from inequities like systematic oppression and lack of democracy and facilitates the boundless pursuit of environmental extractivism. Because international bodies have been striving to sustain and create the conditions for neoliberal institutionalism, they cannot guide us toward an appropriate climate solution.

My analysis of the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreements exemplified the inherent problem within all international agreements. While IR scholarships can argue the main blockage lies within the so-called "Breadth vs. Depth tradeoff", these narratives obscure how the hegemony of capitalism and shallow democracy are the real systematic factors limiting our ability to agree upon international action against climate change. The dance between "winner and losers", whether one group of states is benefiting or losing in any scenario is more of a symptom of the problem than the problem itself. The fact that a climate change solution goes against what

winners or losers would want is of course, a problem with incentive, but a bigger problem with interests. In other words, states do not have an *incentive* to reduce emissions because they are *interested* in further economic growth alongside capitalist lines. International institutions are made up of states with capitalist interests, so the agreements they produce will be in fulfillment of those interests. However, IR scholarship fails to realize that the Breadth and Depth problem is only a problem because those interests are directed by capitalism. A commitment by these states to accumulate wealth is driven by the capitalist system. Removing that system and implementing interests that serve *everyone* is integral to solving the Breadth V. Depth tradeoff. By doing so, (1) you remove the lack of incentive for states to commit deeply, as it will benefit them to do so, (2) you appeal to the interests of all states, in turn securing widespread participation.

However, this is not just a problem of interests, but of the representation and power of those interests. Neoliberal ideology has produced a world in which humans are only valued in their role as a consumer, making the promise of democracy a mere whisper. The representation within the international system of anti-capital interests doesn't exist in the way that our powerful liberal institutions do. However, this does not mean they do not exist at all. Transnationally, we have witnessed small, but purposeful acts of defiance of the capitalist system and neoliberal institutionalism. These are mainly concentrated attempts by communities to remove themselves from the harm perpetuated by capitalism and exist in ways fundamentally different from any represented society we have seen today. They do this by instilling values within their community that achieve the "enough for everyone and no more" rhetoric that we are seeking in a climate solution. By learning from these communities, I believe we can adopt the values they uphold and employ them into our international climate solution. In the next section, I will investigate two

distinct communities: the Zapatistas from Chiapas, Mexico, and the generalized experiences of indigenous people in The United States and Canada.

Zapatistas

The origins of the Zapatistas date back to 1492 with the voyage of Christopher Columbus. The era of colonialism is a story we're too familiar with, that recounts the pillage and plunder of indigenous peoples. It is a violent and brutal history that although horrific, lays the foundation for much of the violence we continue to see in formerly colonized nations today. The story in Mexico is no different. The conquistadors arrived to the Caribbean, motivated by capitalism and conquest. These voyages in search of resources are perfect examples of how capitalism promoted the accumulation of wealth and exploitation of resources to commodify. In order to enrich themselves, these explorers established violent systems of inequity in order to justify their actions, resulting in what really was the apocalypse for these native peoples. Specifically, in Mexico, the *encomienda*⁶⁷ was an economic and political system based on racial hierarchy used to rationalize the labor and land exploitation taking place in the region. By nature, the settler colonialism led to more and more expansion in the region, subjugated the entire population to these colonial practices. By the early 1800s, the disenfranchisement and lack of power within the native community sparked outrage and much like many other revolutions of the time, we begin to see demonstrations of resistance of Spanish rule. Eventually, this initiates the Mexican Independence movement which reaches fruition in 1821. However, these natives are still the most vulnerable and therefore suffer first in terms of resource allocation and survival under the new government. More land is taken and acquired by various colonial powers, eventually leading to the Mexican revolution led by Emilio Zapata. Zapata was a poor worker who believed in the

⁶⁷ Walters, Karina. "Encomienda System of Communal Slavery and Rise of Mestizo."

rights to land and liberty for the indigenous peoples of Mexico. One of his most famous quotes is that he “would rather die on his feet, than live on his knees”⁶⁸. He was the first to organize the fight against capitalist systems in Mexico and established a revolutionary party that eventually took power called the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)⁶⁹.

However, the calls for revolutionary change once again fell to the wayside to the rule of capitalism. This allowed for the continuation of the implications of colonial exploitation where again, the indigenous community suffered the most. By the mid-20th century, tensions continued to boil and suddenly resistance was re-awoken. This time, the concept of liberation theology is introduced by Samuel Bishop Ruiz. Its influence took hold in the 1970s in Mexico’s southernmost state of Chiapas. Born out of poverty, inequality, racism, and exploitation, Chiapas is rich in natural resources but the poorest state in Mexico. It has one of the country’s largest indigenous population, along with the highest rates of mortality, malnutrition, and illiteracy. The influence of liberation theology spread awareness about the systems of capitalism and colonialism that long plagued their country. Attention to these problems grew in 1985 and led to the formation of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN)⁷⁰. Finally, we reach the catalyst of the Zapatista movement in 1994.

In the early 1990s, the Mexican President began negotiation with the United States and Canada over the North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA. It was in all parties’ interest to pursue a free trade agreement, per motivations from capitalism, but there was one important caveat. In order to sign the agreement, Mexico would have to rescind Article 27 of the constitution which states that, “ownership of the lands and waters within the boundaries of the national territory is vested originally in the Nation, which has had, and has the right to transfer

⁶⁸ Marcos, Subcomandante. “Conversations with Durito: Stories of the Zapatistas and Neoliberalism.”

⁶⁹ Mexico - Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)

⁷⁰ Taymor, Emerson. “Constitution, Articles 3, 27, 123 and 130”

title thereof to private persons, thereby constituting private property."⁷¹ This article protects the poor, destitute and indigenous and by granting certain rights to public land. This right establishes that communal land that can be used sustenance for food, trade, and other means of survival. By negating this clause, the land desired by capitalist forces for the use of resource and labor exploitation would become privatized, leaving the most vulnerable populations with four options: assimilation, migration, die, or resist. So, on Jan 1, 1994, NAFTA Day, the Zapatistas mobilized against the Mexican government and have been fighting ever since.

Overall, the establishment and struggle of the Zapatista Army was a wake-up call for both the Mexican government and the non-indigenous population to bring awareness to the rights of indigenous people. Their story is crucial not just because of their courageous plight, but because of the nature of their declaration. Not only are they demanding the most basic of human rights, “work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, liberty, democracy, justice, and peace”⁷², but directly attributing the lack of those rights to neoliberal institutionalism. The connection between the two couldn’t be clearer.

Indigenous Groups in the United States and Canada

The story of indigenous groups in the United States and Canada is not homogenous or simple. It recounts the vast history of diverse and complex groups over various geographical regions. I do not attempt to engage shallowly with their intricate history but for the sake of my argument, must focus on a very niche analysis of their experiences. Specifically, I will discuss the link between gender and climate change within these indigenous communities. This particular focus demonstrates how an intersectional framework learned from indigenous communities can be applied to the climate change solution. Furthermore, I will discuss how these communities exemplify social interactions between the each other and the environment that are

⁷¹ Godelmann, Iker Reyes. “The Zapatista Movement: The Fight for Indigenous Rights in Mexico.”

⁷² Marcos, Subcomandante. “Conversations with Durito: Stories of the Zapatistas and Neoliberalism.”

most beneficial to the climate movement and should therefore be adopted in our global climate change solution.

The Role of Gender in Indigenous Communities

Prior to colonialism, the role of gender within these communities was often “gynocritic”, centering the sociopolitical role of females in which they were “figures of moral authority”, and “[had] control over property”⁷³. Gender identities were often fluid, nonconforming, and actively respected by community members. In this way, one’s role in society had very little to do with their gender or biological makeup, but with their contribution to the community. Throughout North America, several tribes have historically protected gender and sexual diversity: “Apache, Navajo, Winnebago, Cheyenne, Sioux, Menominee, Osage, Klamath, Shoshoni, Aleut, Pawnee, Mohave, Quinault, Ojibwe, Aztec, Seminole, Crow, and Eskimo”⁷⁴. The intent remained that all members of these communities be valued equally and considered necessary for the survival of the whole. Furthermore, any instance of gender violence was prohibited. “Domestic violence and child abuse were not tolerated; any perpetrator’s actions would be avenged by male relatives and often lead to banishment”⁷⁵. This reinforces the cultural value of gender equality that has long existed within these communities.

Social and Environmental Interactions within Indigenous Communities

Much like the Zapatistas, a brutal history defined by colonialism has shaped and influenced the cultural values of indigenous groups. Similar to the way the encomienda system in used at the advantage of colonizer mentality, patriarchy was used to promote gender inequity and

⁷³ Vinyeta, Kirsten, et al. “Climate Change Through an Intersectional Lens: Gendered Vulnerability and Resilience in Indigenous Communities in the United States” pp.14

⁷⁴ Grahn, Judy. “Another Mother Tongue Gay Words, Gay Worlds.”

⁷⁵ Brave Heart, Maria Yellow Horse et al. “Wicasa Was'aka: restoring the traditional strength of American Indian boys and men.”

control the population. A strategy of disempowerment and violence towards indigenous women was used to enforce European cultural assimilation and delegitimize indigenous values. Despite the long-lasting and continual violence of these colonial practices, many indigenous groups today work to reconstruct and protect positive gender roles within their communities. This speaks to the concept of *resilience* among cultural values. Feminist discourse fails to acknowledge this form of cultural resilience on the account that it often centers around white feminism, an experience that cannot speak to the colonial history and therefore perpetual harm enacted by the capitalist system. By recognizing intersectionality within the climate movement, we access how different groups of identities will be affected and can act accordingly to help the most vulnerable first.

This resilience is also seen in the efforts of indigenous people to continue traditional practices of environmental protection. The exploitative nature of colonialism ravaged the natural resources of these communities, so there is an element of resilience in fighting for environmental justice within such “highly degraded environments.” One account from a man from the Mohawk tribe explains how these cultural practices influence the way in which he interacts with his environment, “Even though [he] is not responsible for the contamination that has affected the fish, as a human being he is implicated in the problem, and therefore it is even more important that he works to maintain his relationships with the fish...the job given to humans is to respectfully harvest these fish... [those] working to maintain tradition feel obligated to maintain these roles.”⁷⁶ These values are tremendously different from the European cultural values that have been instilled in the formation of the liberal world and therefore our international order. By adopting a sense of responsibility and obligation to the earth, we change our behavior to protect and sustain its environment. This explains the native activism we see today against pipelines,

⁷⁶ Vinyeta, Kirsten, et al. “Climate Change Through an Intersectional Lens: Gendered Vulnerability and Resilience in Indigenous Communities in the United States” pp. 17

fracking, and other harmful resource extraction enacted by capitalism. Indigenous people recognize the connection of their own colonial scars to the continued harm of a capitalist system. So, in fighting against that system, they maintain their traditional values of responsibility to their community and responsibility to the land.

A Call for Collective Locality

“...there is a pressing need to change the basic relationships between humanity and the earth.”⁷⁷

- Magdoff and Foster, *An Environmentalist Guide to Capitalism and the Environment*

We’ve come to recognize that (1) through analyzation of the breadth v. depth tradeoff, international agreements uphold a commitment to capitalism, (2) this commitment perpetuates environmental exploitation and inequality, rendering it ineffective as a part of any climate solution, and (3) neoliberal ideology as a result of capitalism has engrained these injustices as necessary to global representative powers. In order to overcome the failures of previous climate solutions and transcend this systematic harm to each other and the environment, I propose the adoption of *collective locality*. Collective locality calls for the adoption of cultural values that will transform our social relations between each other and the environment, while *universally* dismantling and eventually abandoning capitalism. ‘Collective’ refers the essential widespread participation of transnational⁷⁸ actors. ‘Locality’ refers to the local interpretation of those interactions within one’s own community and environment.

As exemplified by the cultural values derived from the experiences of the Zapatistas and Indigenous communities in North America, representation of locality already exists in many

⁷⁷ Magdoff, Fred, and John Bellamy Foster, pp. 1

⁷⁸ To clarify: transnational refers to the participation of actors beyond the state. International refers to the geographical point in which we all exist on earth.

communities. As I understand it the promotion of the cultural values that exists within those places will provide the blueprint necessary to reorder our social relations. Those values are as follows: kinship and ecological intersection feminism. These values further promote responsibility, obligation, and equality as the foundation for this mode of relations. Such an adaptation will replace neoliberal ideology within each localized community. By focusing on the *local* of locality, we can more effectively help the most marginalized and threaten communities of the climate crisis and account for cultural variability among values. This focuses on public interest as certain communities require localized solutions. For example, in Germany, a renewable energy policy was implemented in which citizens voted to remove their energy from the private sector⁷⁹. This goes against the neoliberal ideology that calls for centralization and restores public services to the public rather than large corporations. This is a reversal of energy privatization and was decided collectively by the people of Germany, a small-scale but more democratic solution that is in favor of public interests rather than private profit. Attempts like this to make localized changes should be practiced universally and promoted in our transnational relations in order to fundamentally change the international system.

By definition, this movement exists under an “enough for everyone and no more” ideology, which abandons capitalism. From there, we reassert our value for each other as members of humanity, fostering true equality and democracy. Furthermore, we will acknowledge our universal responsibility to the environment, resulting in an obligation by everyone to enact an effective climate change solution. With the shackles of capitalism no longer holding us back, I believe a cease to carbon emissions and other ambitious climate goals will not only be easier, but inevitable. Lastly, because this will start locally but remain collective, the

⁷⁹ Klein, pp. 83

shift in values will gain awareness and recognition on a global scale, pressuring international system which will only become more desperate as the climate crisis continues.

Kinship

Kinship is a term used to describe a familial-based social relation. I have adopted the understanding of kinship from Donna J. Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin and the Chthulucene*. Here she defines kin as, "[a] multispecies ecojustice which can also embrace diverse human people."⁸⁰ In other words, kinship calls for the connection of humans beyond ancestry or genealogy, but instead allows us to be connected as beings of the earth, something we undeniable and collectively are. It is quite a revolutionary way of thinking, but absolutely crucial to collective locality. This connection erases the individualistic ideology of neoliberalism and facilitates collective action to provide for one another rather than just one's self. This attempt to universally identify with others is common in human rights literature and proves to be an integral part of any justice movement. Take cosmopolitanism for example, a very similar concept to kinship, which suggests that adoption of the same values ensures peaceful social relations. As exemplified in *Transnational Cosmopolitanism* by Inés Valdez, cosmopolitanism requires "transnational solidarity", a mechanism to bridge identification through values and goals so as to unite subjects across various racial and political commonalities. Kinship accomplishes this goal by enabling a coalition of communities whose values lie in a responsibility and obligation to protect each other and the environment. We need therefore, an implementation of transnational kinship in which we each feel and practice a sense of responsibility and obligation regardless of previous barriers of identification (race, nationality, religion, etc.)

⁸⁰ Haraway, pp. 102

Ecological-Intersectional Feminism (EIF)

Ecological intersectional feminism refers to the responsibility and obligation necessary to effectively address the communities most impacted by climate change. This is exemplified by the indigenous communities who offer two unique understandings about the climate solution. One, it requires a reciprocal relation with nature. Two, it requires an attention and consideration of intersecting identities that may either be affected in unique ways or offer unique insight. First, a reciprocal relationship with nature will not only protect the environment, but actively work against the harm of land exploitation and extractivism. To repeat, our social interactions are currently facilitated by our ability to increase and accumulate value. This refers to the exploitative nature of capitalism as explained previously and its undeniable role in the climate change crisis. By adopting and practicing a reciprocal relationship with nature, we develop meaningful mitigation and adaptation strategies that are effective and exist outside of capitalism (as they are rooted in the traditions of anti-capitalist indigenous societies).

Furthermore, the cultural resilience mentioned before is integral to understanding the unique strength of the indigenous experience in fighting to protect land. “Despite the numerous barriers posed by the continued impacts of colonization, indigenous communities continue to resist and thrive, using their unique positions as indigenous sovereigns to form coalitions and movements that are innovative, strategic, and culturally appropriate.”⁸¹ In other words, these communities have experience with working against these forces and prevailing in ways that would apply to the revolutionary drive needed for this type of restructuring of society.

Second, the perspective of intersectional feminism is essential to ensuring the protection of the communities most affected by climate change. This is exemplified both by the Zapatistas and Indigenous groups, but also simply the definition of intersectionality. A term coined by

⁸¹ Vinyeta, Kirsten, et al. “Climate Change Through an Intersectional Lens: Gendered Vulnerability and Resilience in Indigenous Communities in the United States” pp.19

Kimberly Crenshaw, intersectionality refers to how the overlap of various social identities, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class contribute to a specific type of systematic oppression and discrimination experienced by an individual. For the Zapatistas, the discrimination against their intersecting identities resulted in the systematic oppression most effected by the people of Chiapas. An account for intersection within the NAFTA negotiations would've stopped the free trade deal right in its tracks as it clearly disproportionately affected people in Mexico who relied on article 27 of the constitution. Or for the indigenous groups in North America who also suffered colonial violence, which created systems of oppression that are consistently ignored by their respective governments. By incorporating intersectionality into our ecological feminism, we can accurately attend to multiple identities effected by the climate crisis. "By taking gender into account, indigenous communities and their allies can ensure that climate change initiatives alleviate, not exacerbate, gender-based oppression."⁸² This goes for policymakers, program directors, government officials, community organizers, etc. This must be adopted by all levels of society in promotion of this cultural value in order to foster the long-term practice and participation of all identities in development of climate change policies and programs.

Conclusion

To conclude, in adoption of collective locality, I admit my skepticism regarding its immediate or even timely implementation. Any analysis of capitalism and our fixation on neoliberal ideology mirrors a bleak outlook to the future. As these systems remain in place, what could possible initiate and facilitate the revolutionary global shift I am calling for. Even with my suggestion of *Collective Locality*, it remains difficult to imagine a world beyond our capitalist

⁸² Vinyeta, Kirsten, et al. "Climate Change Through an Intersectional Lens: Gendered Vulnerability and Resilience in Indigenous Communities in the United States" pp.49

system. However, people once said the same about kings, or the feudal system, or empires. There will be a catalyst, an event, a moment in history that changes the tides of capitalism and shakes the foundation of our world order as we know it. Here, I point to an unfortunate but realistic notion of “common disaster”. As explained by Valdez, “the common disaster is a starting point that enables new forms of mutual identification among those subjected...that may enable coalition.”⁸³ This mutual identification could be kinship which as explained, if established is the first step in achieving collective locality. This is where the concept of cultural resilience becomes most important. The values of anti-capitalist, anti-colonialism, and anti-imperialism are broad in exist among minoritized communities everywhere. The shared experience of the oppressed provides an understanding that can connect these communities transnationally and ultimately pave the way for a global vision of collective locality.

I do not wish for the harm that will surely reach more and more vulnerable communities as the climate crisis continues but it may provide the spark needed for revolution. Furthermore, as the climate situation worsens, so will global relations, increasing the chances of that catalyst occurring. The question that remains is not a *what*, but a *when*. Therefore, I am hopeful to say that it is only a matter of time.

⁸³Valdez Inés. “Transnational Cosmopolitanism Kant, Du Bois, and Justice as a Political Craft.” pp. 147

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